

**Claim Amendments**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims**

Claims 1-8. (Canceled)

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing (meth)acrylic acid copolymers, which comprises the steps:

- (1) free-radically polymerizing (meth)acrylic acid, thereby resulting in a polymer I;  
and
- (2) amidating polymer I resulting from process step (1) by reaction with at least one aminoalkanesulfonic acid to form a sulfonated polymer, wherein the molar ratio of monomers in polymer I to aminoalkanesulfonic acid ranges from 15:1 to ~~2:1~~ 4:1 and the (meth)acrylic acid copolymer comprises:
  - (a) from 30 to 95 % by weight of a poly(meth)acrylic acid basic framework,
  - (b) from 5 to 70 % by weight of amide units based on aminoalkylsulfonic acids,

the total weight of the units in the sulfonated polymer being 100 % by weight and all weights being based on the sulfonated polymer.

Claim 10. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein process step (1) is carried out at temperatures ranging from 100 to 200° C.

Claim 11. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein process step (2) is carried out at temperatures ranging from 140 to 250° C.

Claim 12. (Canceled)

Claim 13. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein polymer I in solution has a solids content of 10 to 70 %.

Claims 14-18. (Canceled)